INTRODUCTION

THE GREEK TEXT of the *De Monarchia* is preserved in the *Codex Paris.* gr. 450, of the year 1364, and in the *Codex Claromont.* 82, of 1541. It had also been in the Strassburg manuscript (*Cod.* gr. 9, of the thirteenth century) which was destroyed in the fire of 1870.

The purpose of this short treatise was to prove monotheism from the writings of Greek literature. Consequently, the author quoted the tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; the comic writers, Philemon, Orpheus, and Menander; and the philosophers, Plato and Pythagoras.

The manuscripts list this treatise with the writings of St. Justin, and Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 4.18) explicitly attributes it to him. However, Eusebius stated that the *De Monarchia* he had read proved monotheism with arguments taken from both Sacred Scripture and pagan literature. The treatise we now have uses proofs taken *only* from pagan sources. Consequently, there is considerable doubt concerning the authorship of this treatise. It was probably composed in the third century[1] when such great use was made of those falsified verses of Greek poetry.

The texts used for this translation are those of Migne, *PG* 6.312-325, and of J. C. T. von Otto, *Corpus Apologetarum Christianorum saeculi secundi* (Jena 1879) III 126-158.

1 Cf. G. Bardy, 'Justin' *Dict. theol. cath.* 8.2240, and J. M. Semisch, *loc. cit.* 163-167.

CONTENTS

Chapter		*Page*
1	Plan of the treatise	443
2	Proof of the unity of God	444
3	Future judgment proved from pagan writings	447
4	God is not appeased by pagan libations	448
5	The vanity of false gods	450
6	The One True God alone should be worshipped	454

THE MONARCHY
OR
THE RULE OF GOD

Chapter 1

LTHOUGH human nature from the beginning was endowed with a twofold gift of intelligence and safety for the purpose of attaining a knowledge of the truth and of the worship due to the One Lord of all, yet envy, appealing to the superiority of man's greatness, induced him to make idols. And, after persisting many years, this superstitious custom passed along the deception to many as though it were natural and correct. Men who have at heart the interest of other men (I should say of God), must remind careless men of what they should know. Indeed, by means of the things under the sky, truth of itself has the power to show the order established by Him who created those things. But men became completely neglectful, and, while God endured all this in patience, they rashly transferred to mortals the name that belongs to the One and Only God. From the few this sinful disease spread until it infected many, who, by this common practice [of idolatry], lost sight of things eternal and immutable. From earliest times men began to practice mystic and public rites in honor of their leaders, and in this way caused their posterity to forget the [original] Catholic faith.[1] But, with a mind filled with love of God, as I stated above, I shall use the language of one who loves man, and set it before intelligent men. For certainly, all

1 Namely, that worship was due only to the one true God.

those who witness the order in this universe should be intelligent enough to know that they ought unchangeably to worship Him who knows all things. And I propose to do this, not by resorting to pretty-sounding phrases, but by producing proofs from the ancient Greek poetry and from writings well know to everyone. In this way their own poets and ballad writers shall reveal the ignorance of those leaders who passed down idolatry to the multitudes as law.

Chapter 2

As a first witness, [let us take] Aeschylus, who, having expounded the different opinions prevalent at his time, expressed the following view of the unity of God:

> *'Afar from mortals place the holy God,*
> *Nor ever think that He, like to thyself,*
> *In fleshly robes is clad; for all unknown*
> *Is the great God to such a worm as thou.*
> *Divers similitudes He bears; at times*
> *He seems as a consuming fire that burns*
> *Unsated; now like water, then again*
> *In sable folds of darkness shrouds Himself.*
> *Nay, even the very beasts of earth reflect*
> *His sacred image; whilst the wind, clouds, rain,*
> *The roll of thunder and the lightning flash,*
> *Reveal to men their great and sovereign Lord.*
> *Before Him sea and rocks, with every fount,*
> *And all the water floods, in reverence bend;*
> *And as they gaze upon His awful face,*
> *Mountains and earth, with the profoundest depths*
> *Of ocean, and the highest peaks of hills,*
> *Tremble: for He is Lord Omnipotent;*

And this the glory is of God Most High.'[1]

Nor was Aeschylus the only one well-versed in the knowledge of God, for Sophocles also had this to say of the One and Only God and Creator of all things:

'There is one God, in truth there is but one,
Who made the heavens and the broad earth
beneath,
The glancing waves of ocean, and the winds;
But many of us mortals err in heart,
And set up, for a solace in our woes,
Images of the gods in stone and brass,
Or figures carved in gold or ivory;
And, furnishing for these, our handiworks,
Both sacrifice and rite magnificent,
We think that thus we do a pious work.'[2]

Philemon, who wrote so much about ancient customs, also gave evidence of knowing something of the truth when he wrote:

'Tell me what thoughts of God we should
conceive?
One, all things seeing, yet Himself unseen.'[3]

Even Orpheus, who invented three hundred and sixty gods, is a witness in my favor, for, in his work called *The Testaments,* he seems to repent of his early error when he writes:

'I'll speak to those who lawfully may hear;
All others, ye profane, now close the doors!
And, O Musaeus, hearken thou to me,

1 The translation of the Greek poets is that used by G. Reith in Roberts and Donaldson's *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* 2.330.
2 *Ibid.,* p. 331.
3 *Ibid.*

Who offspring art of the light-bringing moon.
The words I tell thee now are true indeed,
And if thou former thoughts of mine hast seen,
Let them not rob thee of the blessed life;
But rather turn the depths of thine own heart
Unto that place where light and knowledge dwell.
Take thou the word divine to guide thy steps;
And walking well in the straight certain path,
Look to the one and universal King,
One, self-begotten, and the only One
Of whom all things, and we ourselves, are sprung.
All things are open to His piercing gaze,
While He Himself is still invisible;
Present in all His works, though still unseen,
He gives to mortals evil out of good,
Sending both chilling wars and tearful griefs;
And other than the Great King there is none.
The clouds forever settle round His throne;
And mortal eyeballs in mere mortal eyes
Are weak to see Jove, who reigns over all.
He sits established in the brazen heavens
Upon His throne; and underneath His feet
He treads the earth, and stretches His right hand
To all the ends of ocean, and around
Tremble the mountain ranges, and the streams,
The depths, too, of the blue and hoary sea.'[4]

Indeed, he expressed himself as though he had seen the majesty of God with his own eyes.

Pythagoras, too, testified to the same thing when he wrote:

'Should one in boldness say, Lo, I am God!
Besides the One—Eternal—Infinite,

4 *Ibid.*

Then let him from the throne he has usurped
Put forth his power and form another globe,
Such as we dwell in, saying, This is mine.
Nor only so, but in this new domain
Forever let him dwell. If this he can,
Then verily he is a god proclaimed.'[5]

Chapter 3

Furthermore, from your own writers I can produce witnesses to testify that God alone has the power to judge man both for his actions in this life and for his failure to attain a knowledge of the Deity. First, listen to Sophocles, who says:

'That time of times shall come, shall surely come,
When from the golden ether down shall fall.
Fire's teeming treasure, and in burning flames
All things of earth and heaven shall be
consumed;
And then, when all creation is dissolved,
The sea's last wave shall die upon the shore,
The bald earth stript of trees, the burning air
No winged thing upon its breast shall bear.
There are two roads to Hades, well we know;
By this the righteous, and by that the bad,
On to their separate fates shall tend; and He,
Who all things had destroyed, shall all things
save.'[1]

And Philemon:[2]

'Think'st thou, Nicostratus, the dead, who here

5 *Ibid.*, p. 332.

1 *Ibid.*, p. 332.
2 Some critics attribute these verses to Diphilus.

Enjoyed whate'er of good life offers man,
Escape the notice of Divinity,
As if they might forgotten be of Him?
Nay, there's an eye of Justice watching all:
For if the good and bad find the same end,
Then go thou, rob, steal, plunder, at thy will,
Do all the evil that to thee seems good.
Yet be not thou deceived; for underneath
There is a throne and place of judgment set,
Which God the Lord of all shall occupy;
Whose name is terrible, nor shall I dare
To breathe it forth in feeble human speech.'[3]

And Euripides:[4]

'Not grudgingly he gives a lease of life,
That we the holders may be fairly judged;
And if a mortal man doth think to hide
His daily guilt from the keen eye of God,
It is an evil thought; so if perchance
He meets with leisure-taking Justice, she
Demands him as her lawful prisoner:
But many of you hastily commit
A twofold sin, and say there is no God.
But, ah! there is; there is. Then see that he
Who, being wicked, prospers, may redeem
The time so precious, else hereafter waits
For him the due reward of punishment.'[5]

Chapter 4

Philemon[1] again is my witness to prove that God is not

3 Reith, *op. cit.*, p. 333.
4 Clement of Alexandria ascribes these verses to Diphilus.
5 Reith, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

1 Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius assign these verses to Menander, while some modern critics think they are spurious.

appeased by the libations and incense of sinners, but justly punishes each one. Here are his words:

'If any one should dream, O Pamphilus,
By sacrifice of bulls or goats—nay, then,
By Jupiter—of any such like things;
Or by presenting gold or purple robes,
Or images of ivory and gems;
If thus he thinks he may propitiate God,
He errs, and shows himself a silly one.
But let him rather useful be, and good,
Committing neither theft nor lustful deeds,
Nor murder foul, for earthly riches' sake.
Let him of no man covet wife or child,
His splendid house, his wide-spread property,
His maiden, or his slave born in his house,
His horses, or his cattle, or his beeves.
Nay, covet not a pin, O Pamphilus,
For God, close by you, sees whate'er you do.
He ever with the wicked man is wroth,
But in the righteous takes a pleasure still,
Permitting him to reap fruit of his toil,
And to enjoy the bread his sweat has won.
But being righteous, see thou pay thy vows,
And unto God the giver offer gifts.
Place thy adorning not in outward shows,
But in an inward purity of heart;
Hearing the thunder then, thou shalt not fear,
Nor shalt thou flee, O master, at its voice,
For thou art conscious of no evil deed,
And God, close by you, sees whate'er you do.'[2]

Even Plato, in his *Timaeus,* says: 'But if any one were to

2 Reith, *op. cit.,* p. 334.

begin a profound study of these things, he would not be able to learn the distinction between the human and divine nature, for God can mix many things into one, and can return one back into many things (for such is His knowledge and power). But the man does not live, or ever shall live, who is able to perform such deeds.'[3]

Chapter 5

Menander, in his *Auriga,* speaks thus of those who believe they should be called by the holy and perfect name [of God], which name some have received by a vain tradition, as if they were gods:

'If there exists a god who walketh out
With an old woman, or who enters in
By stealth to houses through the folding-doors,
He ne'er can please me; nay, but only he
Who stays at home, a just and righteous God,
To give salvation to His worshippers.'[1]

And the same Menander, in his *Sacerdos,* says:

'There is no God, O woman, that can save
One man by another; if indeed a man,
With sound of tinkling cymbals, charm a god
Where'er he listeth, then assuredly
He who doth so is much the greater god.
But these, O Rhode, are but the cunning schemes
Which daring men of intrigue, unabashed,
Invent to earn themselves a livelihood,
And yield a laughing-stock unto the age.'[2]

3 *Timaeus* 68D.

1 Reith, *op. cit.,* p. 335
2 *Ibid.*

Again, in his *Odiosus*, Menander proved that they who are considered gods are not gods at all:

'Yea, if I this beheld, I then should wish
That back to me again my soul returned.
For tell me where, O Getas, in the world
'Tis possible to find out righteous gods?'[3]

And in his *Depositum*:

'There's an unrighteous judgment, as it seems,
Even with the gods.'[4]

Then there is the testimony of Euripides the tragedian, who says in his *Orestes*:

'Apollo having caused by his command
The murder of the mother, knoweth not
What honesty and justice signify.
We serve the gods, whoever they may be;
But from the central regions of the earth
You see Apollo plainly gives response
To mortals, and whate'er he says we do.
I him obeyed, when she that bore me fell
Slain by my hand: he is the wicked man.
Then slay him, for 'twas he that sinned, not I.
What could I do? Think you not that the god
Should free me from the blame which I do bear?'[5]

Again, Euripides in the *Hippolytus: 'But on these points the gods do not judge right.'*[6] And in his *Ion* he says:

'But in the daughter of Erechtheus
What interest have I? for that pertains
Not unto such as me. But when I come

3 *Ibid.*
4 *Ibid. p.* 336.
5 *Ibid.*
6 *Ibid.*

With golden vessels for libations, I
The dew shall sprinkle, and yet needs must warn
Apollo of his deeds; for when he weds
Maidens by force, the children secretly
Begotten he betrays, and them neglects
When dying. Thus not you; but while you may
Always pursue the virtues, for the gods
Will surely punish men of wickedness.
How is it right that you, who have prescribed
Laws for men's guidance, live unrighteously?
But ye being absent, I shall freely speak,
And ye to men shall satisfaction give
For marriage forced, thou Neptune, Jupiter,
Who over heaven presides. The temples ye
Have emptied, while injustice ye repay.
And though ye laud the prudent to the skies,
Yet have ye filled your hands with wickedness.
No longer is it right to call men ill
If they do imitate the sins[7] *of gods;*
Nay, evil let their teachers rather be.'[8]

And in *Archelaus: 'Full oft, my son, do gods mankind perplex.'*[9] And in his *Bellerophon: 'They are no gods, who do not what is right.'*[10] And in another passage of the same play:

'Gods reign in heaven most certainly, says one;
But it is false—yea false: and let not him
Who speaks thus, be so foolish as to use
Ancient tradition, or to pay regard
Unto my words: but with unclouded eye

7 The *kalá* of the text is amended to the *kakά* of Euripides' text.
8 Reith, *op. cit.*, p. 337.
9 *Ibid.*
10 *Ibid.*

Behold the matter in its clearest light.
Power absolute, I say, robs men of life
And property; transgresses plighted faith;
Nor spares even cities, but with cruel hand
Despoils and devastates them ruthlessly.
But they that do these things have more success
Than those who live a gentle pious life;
And cities small, I know, which reverence gods,
Submissive bend before the many spears
Of larger impious ones; yea, and methinks
If any man lounge idly, and abstain
From working with his hands for sustenance,
Yet pray the gods; he very soon will know
If they from him misfortunes will avert.'[11]

And Menander in *Diphilus:*

'Therefore ascribe we praise and honor great
To Him who Father is, and Lord of all:
Sole maker and preserver of mankind,
And who with all good things our earth has stored.'[12]

Likewise, in his *Piscatores,* Menander says:

'For I deem that which nourishes my life
Is God: but he whose custom 'tis to meet
The wants of men—He needs not at our hands
Renewed supplies, Himself being all in all.'[13]

And in the *Fratres:*

'God ever is intelligence to those
Who righteous are: so wisest men have thought.'[14]

11 *Ibid.*
12 Not found in Menander's writings. Clement of Alexandria attributed these verses to Diphilus.
13 Reith, *op. cit.,* p. 338.
14 *Ibid.*

And in his *Tibicinae:*

'Good reason finds a temple in all things
Wherein to worship; for what is the mind,
But just the voice of God within us placed?'[15]

And the tragedian, in his *Phrixus,* says:

'But if the pious and the impious
Share the same lot, how could we think it just,
If Jove, the best, judges not uprightly?'[16]

In the *Philoctetes:*

'You see how honorable gain is deemed
Even to the gods; and how he is admired
Whose shrine is laden most with yellow gold.
What, then, doth hinder thee, since it is good
To be like gods, from thus accepting gain?'[17]

In *Hecuba:*

'O Jupiter! whoever thou mayest be,
Of whom except in word all knowledge fails;
Jupiter, whether thou art indeed
A great necessity, or the mind of man,
I worship thee!'[18]

Chapter 6

This, then, is a proof of virtue and of an ever-prudent mind, to return to that twofold gift, namely, to practise prudence unto salvation, to choose the better things according to one's free will, and not to believe that they who have human passions are the masters of all, when they do not

15 *Ibid.*
16 *Ibid.*
17 *Ibid.,* p. 339.
18 *Ibid.*

even seem to be endowed with power that other men possess. Indeed, in Homer, Demodocus claims that he is self-instructed, when he says: *'God inspired me with melodies,'*[1] though he was but a mortal. Aesculapius and Apollo learn the art of healing from Chiron the Centaur—What an innovation, for gods to learn from a man! Need I mention Bacchus, who, the poet claims, is mad? Or Hercules, who, he says, is miserable? Need I mention Mars and Venus, those teachers of adultery, and establish by means of all these the proof of my demonstration? If someone through ignorance should imitate the actions which are said to be divine, he would be labeled an impure man, an outcast of human society. But if one does it knowingly, he will consider it logical to escape punishment by pointing out that it is no sin to imitate bold godlike actions. If one were to censure these deeds, he will remove from them the famous names, and he will not conceal them with plausible and specious explanations. We, therefore, must accept the true and unchangeable Name—the Name announced not only by my voice, but also by that of our first teachers. Yes, we must accept this Name, lest, by leading a slothful life now, we not only remain totally ignorant of the heavenly glory, but also show ourselves to be ingrates—and for this we must answer to the Eternal Judge.

1 *Odyssey* 22.347. Cf. also, 13.30.